

Mild Head Injury

You have had a mild head injury, also called a concussion. This is a common injury.

If you have any of these symptoms:

- Blood or clear fluid dripping from your ear or nose
- A headache that does not go away or that keeps getting worse
- A severe stiff neck, excessive sleepiness
- Dizziness, double vision, nausea, vomiting, temperature above 101°
- Shaking or staring spells

You need immediate medical attention. ***Come to Urgent Care.***

Most people completely recover after a mild head injury. You may have some problems during the first few days or weeks after the injury. This sheet will help you get through your recovery period. Keep this in mind: If you had a sprained ankle, you would expect to recover fully. As your ankle was healing, you would be patient with yourself and would take it easy. You need to do much the same after a head injury.

Fatigue. Most people with a concussion experience some degree of fatigue during their recovery. You may find that you need to sleep more than usual and that you have less energy at the end of the day. Get the extra sleep you need. A short afternoon nap can help if you cannot function well later in the day.

Return to Work. It is a good idea to return to your usual activities as soon as you feel able, but do this slowly. If possible, you should return to work part time. If you can handle four hours without getting too tired or stressed, then try five and gradually increase to full time. You should return to household chores, bill paying, exercise programs, social activities, hobbies, etc. soon, but do a little at a time. Gradually increase your involvement. You will know that you are pushing yourself too hard or too soon if you get tired and inefficient, or emotional.

Irritability and Emotions. You may feel more irritable and emotional. You may yell at people or say things that you would not normally say. You also may find that you become frustrated or tearful more easily. If this happens, it is usually a
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sign that it is time to take a rest and get away from what you've been doing. It helps to go some place quiet to calm down. If you become violent, or if you or others fear that you may become violent, you should get help.

Uncertainty. You may feel uncertain or confused. You may find that your mind and feelings do not react in the usual ways. You may fear that you are going crazy. This is a normal reaction to a head injury. If you have these feelings, talk about them with someone you trust. It is a good idea to check with someone you trust before making important decisions.

Concentration and Memory. After a concussion, you may find it hard to concentrate or to remember recent events. You may not be able to work in noisy, busy surroundings. It can be hard to do complicated activities, to keep track of several things at once, to switch from one activity to another. It also may be hard to get back to something when you have been interrupted. You can deal with this by avoiding noisy settings at first and then returning to them gradually. Write down the important things you have to remember, or ask for reminders. Return to your usual activities gradually. Do not take on too much at once.

Alcohol. Do not drink alcohol or use any recreational drugs while recovering from a head injury. If you have questions about this, call the number given below.

What's Next? Most people recover fully from a mild head injury. Usually, they get better rapidly in the first few days. Problems that linger may clear up in a few weeks. Some problems may become more apparent as you return to your normal activities. For example, you may not realize you get tired more easily until you try to work for eight hours. Remember, people usually get better after a head injury, not worse.

If you think you are getting worse, you should see your doctor. If problems like headaches, dizziness, double vision, ringing in your ears, or fatigue continue, you should see your doctor again. ***If feelings of irritability or uncertainty, or problems with concentration and memory continue beyond a few weeks,*** ask your doctor or primary clinic to refer you to the Brain Injury Clinic or you may call (612) 725-2000, extension 3562 to set up an appointment or to get more information. You do not have to suffer through this alone.

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